

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1604

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT SZ

SUBJ: SWISS GENERAL ELECTIONS

REF: BERN 4382

1. SUMMARY: SOCIALIST PARTY EMERGED FROM OCT 26 NATIONAL ELECTIONS AS MAJOR "WINNER", WITH GAIN OF 11 LOWER HOUSE SEATS, CHIEFLY TAKEN OUT OF THE HIDE OF THE BADLY-SPLIT RIGHT-WING PARTIES. BREAKDOWN OF POPULAR VOTE SHOWED LESS MARKED SHIFT IN VOTER PREFERENCES AND COMPOSITION OF UPPER HOUSE REMAIN VIRTUALLY UNCHANGED. BASIC SWISS POLITICAL STABILITY WAS ONCE AGAIN DEMONSTRATED AS FOUR MAJOR PARTIES WHICH FORM THE FEDERAL COUNCIL (EXECUTIVE BRANCH OF GOVT) HAVE STRENGTHENED THEIR HOLD ON THE LEGISLATURE.

2. FOLLOWING IS THE NEW DISTRIBUTION OF SEATS IN THE 200-MEMBER LOWER HOUSE (RESULTS OF 1971 ELECTIONS IN PARENS):
SOCIALIST PARTY 55 (46); LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY 47 (49);
CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY 46 (44); SWISS PEOPLES PARTY 21 (23);
LANDESRING INDEPENDENTS 11 (13); LIBERALS 6 (6); LABOR (COMMUNIST)
PARTY 4 (5); SCHWARZENBACH REPUBLICANS 4 (7); NATIONAL ACTION 2
(4); PROTESTANT PEOPLES PARTY 3 (3); POCH/PSA (MAOIST SPLINTER
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GROUP) 1 (0). THE SOCIALIST PARTY RECEIVED 25.1 PERCENT OF VOTE,

A GAIN OF JUST OVER TWO PERCENT OF THE POPULAR VOTE COMPARED WITH 1971, BUT RAN WELL IN ALL PARTS OF THE COUNTRY, ESPECIALLY IN FRENCH-SPEAKING CANTONS. ONLY PART OF ITS ELECTORAL SUCCESS CAN BE ASCRIBED TO RECAPTURE OF SEATS IT LOST IN 1971 DUE TO VAGARIES OF ELECTION SYSTEM, AND TO WORKING PEOPLE RETURNING TO THE FOLD AFTER FLIRTING WITH THE SCHWARZENBACH MOVEMENT IN 1971. THE RECESSION PROBABLY INDUCED SOME MOVEMENT TO THE SOCIALIST PARTY ALSO.

3. OTHER CENTRIST PARTIES HELD THEIR OWN IN TERMS OF POPULAR VOTES, THOUGH SWISS PEOPLES PARTY (SUPPORTED MOSTLY BY CONSERVATIVE FARMERS) CONTINUES ITS LONG-TERM DECLINE.

4. MAJOR "LOSERS" WERE THE REPUBLICANS AND NATIONAL ACTION PARTY WHO DROPPED FROM A COMBINED TOTAL OF 11 TO SIX SEATS. DISSENSION IN THE PARTIES' RANKS AND PARADOXICALLY A LESSENER CONCERN ABOUT EXCESSIVE NUMBERS OF FOREIGNERS IN SWITZERLAND (OWING TO THE RECESSION-INDUCED DEPARTURE OF MANY FOREIGN WORKERS) PROBABLY CONTRIBUTED TO THE HEAVY LOSSES.

5. IN THE 44-MEMBER UPPER HOUSE, ONLY ONE SEAT CHANGED HANDS. THERE THE RADICAL DEMOCRATS AND CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS REMAIN THE DOMINANT PARTIES.

6. THE ELECTION RESULTS WILL BRING ABOUT NO CHANGE IN THE COMPOSITION OF THE COLLEGIAL EXECUTIVE. IN LIGHT OF THE PREVAILING CONSENSUS POLITICS IT IS ALSO UNLIKELY TO RESULT IN ANY GOS POLICY CHANGES, CERTAINLY NONE IN THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS FIELD.

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